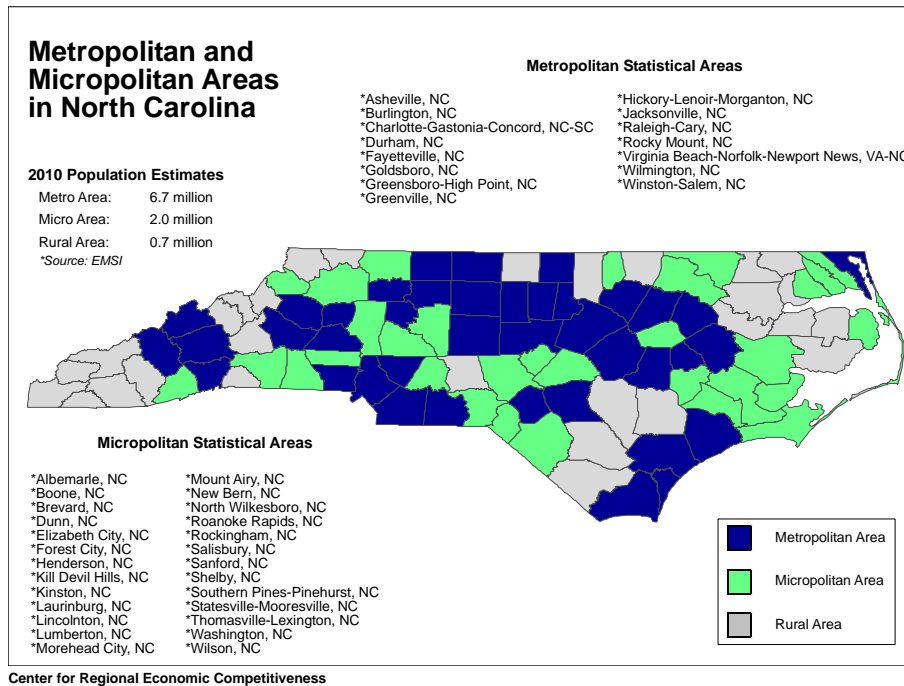


Figure 27: North Carolina's Metropolitan and Micropolitan Areas



impediments to the state's future prosperity. The section then considers the economic and workforce challenges in the state's micropolitan and rural communities. The 2007 Report noted that less densely populated areas faced the most severe structural problems, and this updated research reveals how those problems have been exacerbated during the recession, creating a potential drag on the state's recovery and its future prosperity.

Workforce demand and supply in the state's metropolitan areas

These urban centers are a vital resource in supporting state economic and population growth. They represent the state's greatest concentration of talent and assets, attracting high growth firms that create jobs. These new jobs further draw more people, and the resulting population growth generates additional demand for other goods and services that spurs further demand for teachers, cashiers, police officers, accountants, doctors, nurses and scores of other jobs that serve the area population and comprise the bulk of the workforce. For many of North Carolina's metropolitan areas, population and job growth go hand-in-hand, but not every metropolitan area in the state has been as fortunate. The recession has dampened the growth in even the most successful of the state's metropolitan economies.

Metropolitan areas drive the state's growth

The recession eliminated a large number of the jobs created between 2005 and 2007. Overall, the state's employment levels were roughly the same in 2005 and 2010, but some metropolitan counties managed to add net new jobs, even against the headwinds of recession. Overall, the state's metropolitan areas gained nearly 40,000 jobs between 2005 and 2010; however, that growth was concentrated in a few counties.